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# AFGHANISTAN

## Alternative Livelihoods

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PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

*USAID is revitalizing the rural economy by promoting the cultivation of high-value crops, such as raisins, fruits, and vegetables. In Helmand Province, for example, farmers who formerly grew opium poppy have re-entered legitimate export markets lost during the conflict, which include cotton, peanut, and vegetable seed.*

### ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS SNAPSHOT

- Cleaned 2,780 km of irrigation and drainage canals and karez (underground water channels) and improved irrigation for 67,620 ha of farmland.
- Paid 12 million paid in cash-for-work salaries to 63,157 farmers, averaging a net income of \$109 per worker over 51 days (\$3.75 per day).
- Distribution of 40,000 MT of fertilizer and 14,000 MT of wheat and vegetable seed to 550,000 farmers in across all 34 provinces.

### OVERVIEW

In December 2004, USAID launched its alternative livelihoods program (ALP), to provide economic alternatives to the production of poppy in Afghanistan. The program is a key element in the U.S. Government's counter-narcotics strategy, and is designed to accelerate economic growth in Afghanistan's principal poppy-producing provinces. ALP has a budget of approximately \$475 million for the next four years. The program principally targets core poppy-producing areas in southern (Helmand and Kandahar Provinces), eastern (Nangarhar and Laghman Provinces) and northern (Badakhshan Province) Afghanistan, but will include activities in other provinces where poppy cultivation is expanding or where there has been a concerted effort to eliminate narcotics production.

### PROGRAMS

#### IMMEDIATE NEEDS

The Immediate Needs component of ALP consists of labor-intensive cash for work projects that build or rehabilitate productive infrastructure, and income generation and training activities for vulnerable households. This component provides both a source of immediate income for rural households and a stimulus to local economic growth. The program began in Helmand in December 2004, and in Nangarhar the following month. The program is underway and/or starting in Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunar, Uruzgan and Laghman provinces To date this program has:

- Cleaned 2,780 km of irrigation and drainage canals and karez (underground water channels) and improved irrigation for 67,620 ha of farmland.
- 236 km of rural roads in poppy-growing areas repaired, reducing travel time an average of 55% and reducing transport-related losses of farm goods by an average of 25%
- Paid 12 million paid in cash-for-work salaries to 63,157 farmers, averaging a net income of \$109 per worker over 51 days (\$3.75 per day).

#### COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive Development is the core component of ALP and aims to accelerate sustainable economic development in regions most affected by poppy production. USAID's program provides inputs, technology and expertise necessary for the production and marketing of high-value licit crops, such as fruits and nuts. The program also dedicates significant resources to providing sources of credit, developing new markets, improving infrastructure and removing administrative constraints that hinder business growth. Activities have included:



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## Alternative Livelihoods (continued)



*In addition to public works projects such as irrigation rehabilitation and watershed management, the Alternative Livelihoods program focuses on increasing production of competitive agricultural products, strengthening agricultural extension systems and creating an enabling business environment.* PHOTOS: USAID/AFGHANISTAN



- Expanding agricultural credit to reach more than 5,000 farmers to date.
- Distribution of 40,000 MT of fertilizer and 14,000 MT of wheat and vegetable seed to 550,000 farmers across all 34 provinces. Distribution timed to compete with poppy planting season.
- Fruit and nut trees being planted on 3,000 hectares of former poppy-producing land in Nangarhar and Laghman.

### GOOD PERFORMERS FUND

USAID's Good Performers Fund will support sustainable economic development initiatives in provinces where there is commitment by leadership and communities to discourage poppy production and maintain a poppy-free province. In these provinces, USAID will fund highly visible public works projects, such as district roads and irrigation projects. So far USAID has:

- In Uruzgan, 41 MT of corn seed and 232 MT of fertilizer were distributed to 3,500 farmers this summer.
- Rural road rehabilitation of 200 km to improve trade and commerce in Ghor underway.

### CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVES

#### BUILD CAPACITY

The Alternative Livelihoods Program is a decentralized activity that relies on cooperation with government entities across the country and in many remote areas. Therefore, a key cross-cutting objective of ALP is to build the capacity of local governments to plan regional economic development, facilitate the growth of local businesses, and effectively administer the public good.

#### GENDER EQUITY

Women are among the poorest and most vulnerable populations in Afghanistan, particularly in the rural areas where ALP operates. In order to better the economic status of women and provide them opportunities for better livelihoods, ALP provides training and raw materials for economic activities that can be performed by women in their households. In Nangarhar province, for example, 10% of all ALP participants are women.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

Since environmental degradation is one of the core reasons for declining agricultural productivity in Afghanistan, ALP undertakes flood protection and other activities that reduce soil erosion. Another key element of the ALP agricultural strategy – agroforestry – will help conserve soils, provide habitat for birds and other animals, and sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need around the world since the Marshall Plan.